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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCCXXXVI.

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NOVEMBER, 1884.

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## WOMAN AS A POLITICAL FACTOR.

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WITH a purely didactic purpose, an important logical truth has recently been compactly stated: "The ballot is a trust." But a trust is clearly not a natural right; men are not born trustees. To say that all men have a natural right to vote is absurd by definition, for voting is helping to govern others. To say that a man has as good a right to govern others as they have to govern him, advances nothing, for natural rights are not the product of mutual concessions. So far from suffrage being a natural right, it is an artificial arrangement devised by society for its best government. These are very simple axiomatic propositions, but they cut across much of the popular talk, and politicians would call them un-American. Nevertheless, I suppose all careful thinkers would acknowledge them, and they are not without practical moment. Natural rights are not to be conditioned; but trusts are to be regulated, and the conditions of suffrage form one of the gravest of our political problems.

I deal here with only a single question, that of female suffrage. Of course, if men have a natural right to vote, women have also; for it is monstrous to suppose that sex creates a difference in respect to absolute natural rights. This is the short

and easy way that is used by many to establish the doctrine of female suffrage. But it is as unsatisfactory as it is simple, and I fear it repels many from a fair consideration of its claims. Profoundly believing in the wisdom of opening the ballot-box to woman, I am anxious to base such a measure upon considerations that will command the confidence of reflecting persons. Let me premise that, while I reject the doctrine that voting is a natural right in any strict or philosophical sense, there is yet a loose sense in which the phrase may be used to express an important thought. Thus, we say of various civic honors and duties, and even of legislative grants, that one man has as good a right to them as another ; or, more positively, that it is not right to deprive any class of them ; when we know that we are not speaking strictly of natural rights, but of social privileges. Such are often spoken of under the name of rights ; as, for example, the right to serve in the militia, or on juries, or of incorporation for business purposes. We thus express our sense of injustice in the establishment of any arbitrary inequalities before the law. This perhaps is the essence of the popular demand for "manhood suffrage." But, thus explained, popular suffrage is as clearly subject to conditions as jury service, though not of the same nature.

It must also be allowed that, other things being equal, the widest extension of suffrage is desirable ; and this for three reasons, which are applicable to its extension to women. First, because it is conducive to patriotism ; second, to education ; and, third, to protection. Let us expand these statements. We all understand that whenever an alien becomes actually qualified for the duties of citizenship, the bestowment of the privilege of participation in the franchise tends to awaken a sense of interest in, and attachment to, his adopted country ; and we know that political education is promoted by the assumption of political responsibilities. We also know that every class of citizens is surer of equal protection before the laws if intrusted with political power. Giving all the weight to these considerations that they deserve, it still remains that the crucial test for voting is the safety of the state. If, as we believe, "every voter is a trustee for good government," then, in our anxiety to enlarge the number of trustees, we must not overlook the primary question of their fitness. In accordance with the suggestion heretofore made, that in itself considered the widest extension of

suffrage is wisest, it would seem that the *onus probandi* lies with those proposing to exclude one-half of the people from all political power. But we are quite content to put it the other way, and to undertake to show affirmatively that society suffers from the exclusion of a class eminently fitted to discharge well the trust of the ballot.

The qualifications for such a duty are twofold, intellectual and moral — capacity to act, and good intention. Without the one, the voter may be a public enemy; without the other, an ignorant dupe. The opponents of woman suffrage do not allege ignorance as the disqualification of the sex, but they do allege what may be called a temperamental incapacity to act wisely in the field of practical politics. This objection, even when not distinctly formulated, is still at the bottom of much of the opposition to female suffrage, and it therefore demands careful consideration.

In the first place, we remark that there is a constant and natural tendency to exaggerate the differential element. That by which we distinguish any person or thing, after a time, comes to present itself to us as the essential character. Careful observers are constantly finding it necessary to correct this disproportionate estimate of the common type and the variation. We have our picturesque idea of the Englishman, the Irishman, and the Frenchman; but when we come into close contact with individuals, we find that the common characteristics of human nature largely preponderate over their racial peculiarities. And so we find in the religious world great central unities underlying external diversities. Catholics, Calvinists, Unitarians, are not mere personifications of creeds. The differentiation of humanity in the direction of sex follows the same law; it is but a differentiation. Not to dwell, as woman suffragists are apt to do, on the Zenobias, the Joan of Arcs, or the Elizabeths of history, because it may well be said that these were exceptional, and indeed abnormal, women, let us confine our attention to the mothers and daughters of every-day life, the beings

“Not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food.”

Are such mere dreamers, emotional and unpractical persons, or do they perform well a great part of the world's common work? In their sphere do they show less than man of the qualities of

patient persistence, of conscientious fidelity to details, of practical wisdom, of careful frugality, of prudent management? We are content to take the judgment of husbands and fathers. Even where the ideal element shines out, and the woman is

“A spirit still and bright,  
With something of an angel light,”

she may answer as truly to the rest of the poet's portrait:

“The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command.”

Whatever foolish notions the novelists may have instilled into our minds, woman is not all emotion. The American woman has her fair share of good sense and of administrative ability, and there is reason to believe that she might bring into the region of governmental affairs positive contributions of thrift, order, integrity, and economy.

We must not lose sight of the ultimate tests of political capacity. In Massachusetts some educational qualifications are required; and, when we consider what their absence in such a state of society would imply, we believe that they are wise. But we must not forget the profound truth in that saying of Mr. Hare, that “no science can reach the depths of the knowledge painfully won in the daily life and the experience of man and woman;” or, as impressively expanded by Mr. Mulford (“The Nation,” p. 231): “The life of the workman, the fulfillment of human relationships in the family and the community, the endeavor of men in the realities of life, is a deeper education; and in work rather than in a certain literary or scientific acquisition is the evidence of the capacity for political power.”

But I do not rest here. While doing justice to the practical side of woman, I do not deny that she is differentiated from man in the relation of the intellect to the emotions. In abstract reasoning, man is better; in emotion, woman is quicker. If man has “the love of wisdom,” woman has “the wisdom of love.” In music we need the blending of the male and female voice; and music only typifies the universal duality in the world of nature and spirit. In every sense it is true that it is not good for man to be alone. In some of the great souls of the world has been

found this union of both the masculine and feminine natures ; but these "double-natured poets" are the exceptions. To produce the effect in the mass, we must have men and women. The world has been learning this lesson. Modern life has availed itself more largely of the companionship of woman, and has been the better and purer for it. In literature, in addition to all that she has produced, woman has been the confessed aid and inspiration of some of the noblest souls. She has infused into theology the spirit of religion, and has softened and rounded its old creeds. Her influence has been alike potential in shaping and administering systems of education. Companionship in thought has led to companionship in action, and we have broken down many walls of partition, we have removed many bars. Hand in hand women now walk with man in many once forbidden paths.

Nor is woman now entirely excluded from all share in governmental administration. Some of the States of our Union have found occasion for her services upon school boards and in the management of charitable, reformatory, and penal institutions. This experiment in Massachusetts was initiated cautiously. When the writer was chairman of the joint committee on charitable institutions in the legislature of 1868, he introduced a proposition to have an advisory board of women associated with the trustees of the Lancaster Reform School for Girls. It was strenuously opposed before the committee by one of the trustees, a man distinguished for his active philanthropy ; but it was adopted, and gradually led the way to such changes as gave women not merely an advisory but an authoritative position on this and similar boards. Without reference to their opinions on the question of suffrage, I have no doubt that those having the best means of judgment would concur in the value of this added force of woman's tact and temperament. Is there any reason to suppose that these special traits, which are of use in administration, would not be efficient and beneficent factors in political power ?

But let us look more distinctly at woman's emotional nature, and consider whether its presence at the polls will be a loss or a gain. That emotional nature will find play mainly in questions involving the taste and the conscience. It will tend to more care as to character in selecting candidates, to refinement in administration, and to more ideal standards in legislation. And

are not these confessed wants in our statesmanship? It is but a crude notion of superficial thinkers and observers that refinement is incompatible with strength. And as to ideal conceptions of duty, we find that they are absolutely essential to invigorate the actual life and to correct the distortions and aberrations of our working conduct. The man or the statesman that prides himself upon being simply "a man of affairs," finds in the end that the higher laws which he ignores are as rigorous and relentless as the law of gravitation. Like Emerson's Brahma, the voice of Duty is continually repeating to heedless ears,

"He reckons ill who leaves me out."

The world's greatest reforms have started from the intuitions of the heart, and have found their early champions in those whom the world looked on as dreamers. The pure heart sees many things that the sharp intellect fails to discern.

I repeat again, that we must not make too much of the differentiation of sex; and the history of reform shows how nobly endowed have been the manly, heroic souls that have led the world onward with the "vision and the faculty divine." Nevertheless, it remains true that the average endowment of ideality is greater in woman; and that in the mass of men the ideal conceptions of youth "fade into the light of common day," and are rebuked and destroyed by the worldly maxims of business life.

What factors shall enter into the determination of our national and State policies is an intensely practical question for the people of the United States; and the great importance to be attached to the introduction of the feminine element lies in the consideration that the great problems of statesmanship for the present and the future are moral ones—questions in the right solution of which the conscience and the moral sense are to have the determining voice as to principles, while the practical judgment has large scope in the adaptation of measures. We need to conjoin the pure intuitions of woman and the wise strength of man. Such questions as these are at the front: Whether we shall seek to increase our territory, or to develop our national character; whether we shall pursue toward other American nations a policy of blustering menace and arrogant interference, or shall gain their good-will by scrupulous justice and a high-toned international courtesy; what shall be the treatment of the weaker races in our own land; how we shall secure the rights and the elevation of the laboring classes; how strengthen the

family tie, and guard the home as the basis of the state; how secure ethical and religious (and yet unsectarian) training in the public schools; and how deal effectively with the overshadowing topic of intemperance. He must be indeed a rash optimist who does not feel that, as to some, at least, of these problems, the scales will long gravitate in the wrong direction without the reënforcing aid of woman's vote.

Take the single question of the suppression of the dram-shop. Observe, I do not say the suppression of the liquor traffic. I select that form of it which all good citizens reprobate. I do not speak here as a prohibitionist. The dram-shop stands the confessed waster of wealth, the disorganizer of labor, the degrader of the laborer, the destroyer of home, the disturber of social order, the ally of every vice, the fomenter of every crime, the paralyzer of every uplifting agency of education or religion,—in fine, the foe of Christian civilization and the enemy of the human race. No one is shameless enough to advocate it, and yet it stands in defiant strength. What is the secret of its strength? The whole liquor interest feels and resents an attack upon any of its outposts. With a sagacity born of selfishness, it sees that the whole traffic in its varied ramifications is a unity; and, as the "Boston Advertiser" well said years ago, "The liquor interest, now that slavery is gone, is the strongest single pecuniary interest in the country." Strong not merely in the enormous capital invested in it, but strong also in that cohesion which binds together those engaged in a traffic obnoxious to the general public. To the power of wealth, nowhere greater than in the United States, we must add the force of an army of employés, and a vastly larger army of patrons enslaved by appetite; and such are the most obedient of vassals. Then we must count as allies many who would be ashamed to be known as such—the owners of real estate that derive large rentals from the saloons. The traffic has thus secured a business recognition. Its chiefs are known on 'Change; it is a customer; it buys as well as sells. It has the sympathy of the commercial classes; not of all, to be sure, but of those who secretly believe that the chief end of man is "to buy and sell and get gain." As, in the old days of the slavery contest, the names of merchant princes, the names of leading business firms, appear in defense of "vested interests," although those interests are in deadly hostility to human welfare. And now, thus supported, the dram-shop appears as a political power. Its employés and devotees have ample time to



attend the caucus, and are never absent from the polls. Except in our largest cities, it rarely rises to the audacity of bringing bar-tenders to the front as candidates for responsible situations; its interest lies in presenting less offensive champions; but, nevertheless, it knows its men and makes no mistakes. The law-abiding citizen is handicapped by his attachment to his party, and by his supposed obligation to support its regular nominees; while the liquor interest comes into politics as a free lance, knowing no party but the party that bids most for its support. Hence the politician regards the liquor vote with respect, the temperance vote with contempt. The "trade" is ready to sacrifice men or parties that stand in its way; its opponents are, as one legislator naïvely wrote, "willing to do as much for the cause of temperance as the good of the Republican party will allow." The result is inevitable; the trade have it their own way. Sometimes they insist on the enactment of shameless laws; sometimes they are content with the election of shameless officials that nullify the enforcement of decent statutes. The general result, either way, is the impunity of the grog-shop. Ten years ago, the Republican party of Massachusetts, in convention assembled, resolved that the dram-shop should be suppressed. But, with its immense majority, it failed in the task that its shrewd politicians never intended to undertake; and to-day the dram-shop is licensed instead of suppressed.

In Massachusetts the women in the voting ages outnumber the men by over fifty thousand. For reasons not necessary now to be considered, it is not probable that the actual voters would ever exceed those of the male sex; but, making all allowances, the female vote would determine any question upon the side where it was largely predominant. Can any one doubt on which side, in the issue against the dram-shop, that vote would be thrown? Here would be a fresh body of voters, comparatively free from appetite for liquor, untrammelled by old party prejudices and ties, with an instinctive feeling that the saloon and the home are natural enemies, and with a quick sympathy with suffering, putting their whole heart into the contest, and supplying, in addition to their own votes, the moral enthusiasm that in itself presages victory. The result would be so sure, that the politician whose highest wisdom is always to be on the winning side, would be in the advance, shouting for the extermination of the dram-shop. And it would go.

I do not suppose that the influence of woman would stop here; everywhere it would be felt for good; and I introduce the temperance question simply as an emphatic and practical illustration. Hers would be the soprano voice in politics, the voice of aspiration, the voice of inspiration. It was no dreamer, no mere sentimentalist, but the profoundest poet of modern Europe, who gave us as the closing prophecy of his Faust, "The woman-soul leadeth us upward and on!"

By this course of thought, I seem to myself to have established suffrage for woman upon a sure and consistent basis, and to have demonstrated that it is not only a just measure, but one conservative of the highest interests of the state. But I know that we shall not carry this reform merely by a logical maintenance of our thesis; we must first answer many objections in the popular mind. One of these, for which I should have but little respect, except for the character of many who urge it, is that as all government must ultimately rest on physical force, it should only be shared by those who maintain it; or, in briefer words, that as women cannot fight, they should not vote. But was military service ever made the condition of suffrage? Did any sane man ever argue for the exclusion from the ballot-box of Quakers, persons physically infirm, or those above the military age? Voting is not a reward, but a duty. Besides, if we assume that fighting is to continue to be a normal and usual function of government, I suppose that women could discharge even that in the same way that the two leading candidates for the presidency found most convenient in the last war. In our modern civilization, even in time of war, mere brute force will always be the servitor of character, intelligence, and wealth. Those who possess these, without regard to sex, will be found most effective supporters of the government in time of peace or war. I may add that, while the history of the late Rebellion furnishes ample proof of the extent to which woman may hearten and strengthen the national forces in a contest that enlists her accordant sympathies or her moral convictions, I believe that the determining vote of woman would be of immense service in restraining the country from wars of selfish ambition or mere aggrandizement.

But at the heart of much of the silent opposition to female suffrage lies a feeling that I am bound thoroughly to respect, and that makes me patient under the slow progress of this

movement. It is the feeling that the distinctive delicacy and purity of her sex would be injuriously affected by her admission into the arena of politics. Society has an immense interest in the preservation of this, and I do not wonder that it shrinks from any unsexing of woman. Tennyson utters profound philosophy when he says :

"Woman is not undeveloped man,  
But diverse ; could we make her as the man,  
Sweet love were slain."

With that would come the destruction of the home, and with the home the state rises and falls. I thoroughly believe in feminine women. But let us examine this matter closely, and see whether this fear of the effect of suffrage is not founded upon prejudice rather than upon reason. Let us, in the first place, clear the question of complications. The "woman question," as it may be called, is a broad one, with many phases, and is one of the important problems of our modern life. What shall be the education of women, and how shall it be obtained ? Shall professions and occupations be indiscriminately opened to them ? Shall they be urged to enter them ? Shall there be perfect equality in the household, or shall the husband have an official headship ? Shall the legal status of woman be identical with that of man, and all statutes either in aid or restraint of her be swept away ? These are grave questions, but their decision is not involved in woman's admission to the ballot.

And again, I regret to say that the prejudice in this direction against the suffrage movement has been increased by the pugilistic style of some of its female advocates. Perhaps this was natural and almost inevitable. Reformers are not apt to be soft of speech and gentle in manners ; and many of the women who lead this movement are somewhat abnormal representatives of their sex, and are smarting under a sense of injustice. But the mass of American women are not clamorous for their rights, but anxious to discharge their duties. Such women find their true voice in the tender eloquence and deep religious earnestness of such advocates as Frances E. Willard, pleading for the ballot as a means of home protection.

Let us now with candor examine all that the exercise of suffrage by woman involves. It presupposes (or ought to, although in the case of male suffrage it often fails to secure it) a sufficient acquaintance with the issues at stake for the formation

of an intelligent purpose, and it requires the slight physical act of depositing at the polls a ballot that represents this purpose. And that is all there is of it. It seems ludicrous to consider gravely the objection that danger to woman's refinement of character is involved in the simple act of attendance at the polls. And yet how much rhetoric has been expended in painting the debasement of such a scene! It was an unnatural libel to assert that American manhood would anywhere insult womanhood. But, happily, we need not now rely upon *à priori* assumptions, for experience has demonstrated that women, exercising the limited right of voting for school committee, or in some of the Territories exercising unrestricted suffrage, or in many of the States attending the polls to cheer on and augment the anti-liquor vote, have been treated with chivalrous courtesy. And the recent device of dividing the voting in the wards of cities and in large towns into precincts, together with the presence of additional scrutinizing officers, has markedly tended to additional good order and removed nearly all discomfort. The habitual presence of women in large numbers at the voting places would undoubtedly still further refine the manners and the surroundings there. In any event, the public exposure to which women could be subject in exercising the right of suffrage would be nothing compared with that which one class cheerfully undergo at the behest of fashion, and another under the pressure of necessity.

If, then, there need be nothing offensive in the act of voting, is there anything unwomanly in the preparation for it? So far as relates to moral and social questions, which form an increasingly large part of governmental problems, they are such as, in their general aspects, naturally interest the wife, the mother, or the sister. And many questions not apparently falling into this class have really vital humanitarian relations that ought to have determining force in their solution. No discussion, for instance, of the tariff question can be complete that treats it merely as one of political economy, although the accumulation and right distribution of national wealth is undoubtedly a potent factor in the elevation of modern society. As President Seeley has well said: "Economic questions are wisely determined only by ethical considerations."

But will it be said that the machinery of politics is debasing? Well, then, the answer is ready: Improve it, or destroy it. If the caucus is corrupt, let the voter ignore it. If it is not a fit

place for women to attend, its decrees need have no binding force on them, nor indeed on men. American virtue has already, in conspicuous instances, risen to the height of defying them. Nor is attendance at a caucus one of the necessary qualifications for voting. There are large numbers of quiet men whom we never expect to see there, but whom we are always glad to see at the polls. Let those whose interest or taste leads them to manage the machinery of politics do so ; but let them know that they must do so in the interest of good morals and good principles, or the day of reckoning will be for them the day of crushing defeat.

We hear sometimes of what is called "the Quaker vote," by which, I suppose, is meant the votes of quiet citizens who have little taste for ordinary politics, and who generally do not care to be found at the polls, but who come out when their aid is needed for truth or righteousness. In this reserve vote is often the hope of the country. And so the state would be the safer if, in every moral exigency, we could depend on the vote of our independent, conscientious, and home-loving country-women.

ROBERT C. PITMAN.